

THE PORTRAYAL OF FIN DEL SIGLO: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL  
MOVEMENTS IN SPAIN IN THE TRILOGY,  
LA LUCHA POR LA VIDA  
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## PREFACE

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, ideas of the middle class were beginning to be threatened by the rise of the proletariat, Socialism, Communism, Anarchism and other extreme ideologies. Spain was gradually being lacerated by dissension; uprisings, separatism and rivalries. There was a drastic collapse of the old system and Spain was also racked by economic turmoil. Famine occurred resulting in the unemployment of the farmers.

Many observed the violence and the struggle during this period as being the total degeneration of the political and social orders. One such group was "The Generation of 1898" which consisted of a group of nonconformist writers. These men were anxious to liquidate the artificial system of government, a government that contributed nothing to the betterment of the people, and to free the lower class from lethargy. "The Generation of 1898" conducted its battle against the government in print. Hence it lacked the physical force which the other movements possessed.

Anarchism, Socialism, Communism, Facism, Syndicalism and Nihilism were the most salient of the movements during this epoch. The proletariat rejoiced at the birth of these structures because they kindled hope of a better life with purpose and meaning.

Pío Baroja matured in the midst of all these movements and the class struggles. Thus, he, like many of his contemporaries, felt a violent reaction to the times in which he lived and he expressed his feelings and views in his trilogy, La Lucha por la vida (La Busca, Mala Hierba and Aurora Roja), written in 1904.

In La Busca and Mala Hierba, there is a view of the slums of Madrid composed of degenerates, murderers, thieves. Poverty and misery are the keynotes of the three novels. The connecting link of the novels is Manuel Alcázar, who is constantly searching for a position in society. He floats from one employment to the next. During this indecisive period, his mother, a symbol of the establishment, dies, severing his ultimate link with the middle-class society. He later falls in love with a girl called la Justa, but she rejects him for another suitor of more prestigious social status. Thus, he embraces briefly varied revolutionary ideologies, and finally he becomes entrenched into the bourgeois society.

There is a display of gamblers, artists, bohemians in Mala Hierba, the second novel of the trilogy. Manuel witnesses the sad life of the lower middle class. Many brutish characters are shown; El Bizco, Don Alonso, El Conejo. These men are violent and harsh. Robert Hasting y Nuñez de Letona, who portrays the thoughts of Nietzsche, is a dynamic figure with a capitalist mentality. He is constantly seen struggling for power and wealth as he is never satisfied. He, as a bastion of the establishment, and Manuel, who he is always influencing, as the sympathizer with the downtrodden of Spanish society, serve as a reflection of the socio-political spectrum of fin del siglo Spain.

A crowd of Anarchists predominates in the last novel, Aurora Roja. Juan is the outstanding character who will destroy woman and child for the Anarchist Movement. There is much disorganization and conflict in regards to Anarchism. Other movements such as Socialism, Syndicalism, and Communism are brought to light in this novel also. Nevertheless, regardless of the confusion, all three novels end with a note of hope. In La Busca, Manuel decides to become a member of the day people, the establishment, instead of being a part of the idleness of the night people. Manuel's friend, Jesús in Mala Hierba, describes a Utopian world free of hate and flourishing with love and harmony. Juan, who dies for the

cause, is eulogized by his fellowmen in Aurora Roja. They feel that his death is meaningful and that his memory will linger on forever in the hearts of his friends and fellow anarchists.

Pío Baroja depicts the forementioned political and philosophical movements in the trilogy, La Lucha por la vida through the characters, their actions, thoughts, attitudes, reactions and speech towards the society of Spain and life in general.

In the following chapters, there will be a detailed and more specific explanation and analysis of the Social and Political Movements portrayed in Baroja's trilogy of fin del siglo Madrid. The three chapters will deal with the movements employing examples from the trilogy to depict the relationship between the two. Chapter I will treat Anarchism, while Chapter II will study Bourgeois Manifestation and Bohemianism. Chapter III will treat Socialism, Communism, Fascism, Syndicalism and Nihilism and the Conclusion will complete the paper giving a summary and evaluation of the thesis in its entirety.

## CHAPTER I

### ANARCHISM

The usual connotations of "Anarchism" include rebellions, riots, bombings and revolutionary concepts. Anarchism does not oppose order; rather it rejects authority, power and state. It is a political philosophy advocating a lack of governmental intrusion upon individual liberty and freedom of choice. The following definition characterizes the Anarchist position:

. . . the state is by definition alien from the society it governs and has a life and needs of its own. By sustaining the military and, in some cases, private property, the government prevents people from cooperating. It keeps its citizens so spiritually impoverished that they cannot fulfill their social propensities as human beings.<sup>1</sup>

Spanish Anarchism can attribute its origin to a Russian aristocrat, Michael Bakunin. Bakunin was an active and zealous leader of rustic rebellions and guerrilla bands.

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<sup>1</sup> Marguerita Bouvard, The Intentional Community Movement (Port Washington, New York, London: Kennikat Press, 1975), p. 89.

He had an instinctive understanding for certain primitive classes of people -- Russian and Italian peasants, brigands and outlaws of all sorts. Not only was he ready, like Garibaldi, to lead them at the barricades and to risk his life for them, but he felt a genuine respect and liking for their ideals and way of life.<sup>2</sup>

Hence his genuine love for the simple people and the freedom of these people prompted him to awaken in them the ideals of freedom and happiness.

Thus, the Anarchist Movement in Europe is the offspring of Bakunin's inventive and productive awareness of the needs of various categories of human beings; his zeal and fervor for revolution and change. In 1864 in southern Italy, Bakunin's creed of Anarchism took a definite form. For the next couple of years he strived for the control of the "International," a political organization of the Anarchists. His philosophy covered several anti-conformistic ideas. He wished to destroy the state, God and all objects that prohibited total freedom and individuality.

In Spain, the Anarchists were most numerous in Catalonia and Andalusia. Their activities extended into Levante, Aragon and Castile. Catalonia especially was influenced by foreign Anarchists who contributed to the atmosphere of rebellion and

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<sup>2</sup>Gerald Brenan, The Spanish Labyrinth (Cambridge: The University Press, 1943), p. 131.

pessimism in 1898. There were births of organization, periods of persecution and clandestine activities. Terrorists exploded bombs and assassinations soared to a peak in the 1890's -- twenty-two people were killed by a bomb-throwing while going to the theatre; ten bystanders were also killed at the Corpus Christi procession; and Canovas, a Conservative Spanish leader, was assassinated. These affronts exposed the nature of anarchist terrorism. The terror of these violent occurrences incited drastic government repression of the Anarchists. This suppression provoked anarchist reprisal resulting in the assassination of three prime ministers. Thus, arose police barbarity and torture. In 1892 as a result of famine and unemployment, a group of peasants revolted, attacking those who were well-dressed. Nevertheless, badly planned strikes took precedence over these impulsive uprisings. A general strike took place in 1903 in Cordoba arising from the hatred of the injustice of the state. It ended when famine struck in 1904.

In Andalusia, Anarchism was confined to states of mind and heated debates. It took on a religious, visionary aspect of a reign of justice and regeneration of worth, freedom and harmony. In the industrial city, this Utopia was an illusory anachronism. It was not an ideal revered by urban workers. Thus, we see a conflict between Utopia, a fantasy, spiritual

world of idealistic Anarchists and the class struggle, the material world of food and money of pragmatic Anarchists. Amidst the lush Andalusian landscape, the attainment of a Utopia was a truism for agrarian laborers. The disproportionate influence of the rich and powerful and the glaring degeneration and decay characteristics of the urban areas were prevalent in rural areas, but were tempered by the paradisaical landscape in Andalusia.

In Baroja's trilogy there is a detailed delineation of the manifestations of urban Anarchism -- degenerates, beggars, the needy, prostitutes and murderers situated in the slums of the city of Madrid, Spain. He gives us a portrait of abject misery and hopelessness generated by the selfishness, apathy and cruelty of the bourgeois class. In this Madrid trilogy (La Busca, Mala Hierba, and Aurora Roja), many tenets of Anarchism are exposed through the character portrayals.

In La Busca, Manuel Alcázar is the principal character. He is characterized as a nonconformist because he refuses to succumb to the bourgeois. Many view him as being worthless to society. The schoolmaster and the organist of the village, both firmly entrenched in the middle class, feel that he is an idler and a vagabond who will amount to nothing.

. . . Manuel gozaba de un carácter ligero, perezoso e indolente; no quería estudiar ni ir a escuela; le encantaban las



correrías por el campo, todo lo atrevido  
y peligroso; . . . <sup>3</sup>

Manuel shirks from all authority. He has a great desire to be an individual without being confined by society. Hence, he floats continuously from one employment to the next. His mother, who is a symbol of the establishment, is perpetually attempting to make him conform, discouraging his idleness and aimlessness. She is responsible for obtaining the innumerable jobs that her son has undertaken. She is always hoping that Manuel will study and become a priest. She urges him to become a priest in the image of his brother, Juan, a firm pillar of the religious establishment; but he instead slowly climbs down the ladder of the middle class stepping across to that of the lower class.

While employed at the boarding house, Manuel is mistreated by the boarders, and he rebels by fighting with one of the guests. He is, thus, thrown out and finds himself with a job at a shoe repair shop which belongs to Ignacio, the cousin of Manuel's mother. The shop is situated in the slums of Madrid. The reader is forced to notice the intense shift of environments -- from a clean middle class setting to the miserable slums. The atmosphere is gloomy and depressing,

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<sup>3</sup>Pío Baroja, Obras Completas (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1946), p. 265.

darkening the skies with the poverty, sordidness and grief.

El madrileño que alguna vez, por casualidad, se encuentra en los barrios pobres próximos al Manzanares, hallase sorprendido ante el espectáculo de miseria y sordidez, de tristeza e incultura que ofrecen las afueras de Madrid con sus rondas miserables, llenas de polvo en verano y de lodo en invierno.<sup>4</sup>

The Anarchist feels that society has created man since men are naturally social animals. Thus, the proletariat is a victim of societal circumstances. Manuel visualizes the terrifying conditions and surroundings which the lower class was compelled to tolerate at la Corrala, a deplorable section of the Madrilenian slums. Many are driven to ask for alms owing to lack of employment; others steal whatever they can. They attempt to survive through a continuous struggle. Their desperate fight to survive is viewed with indifference or impassiveness by the middle class. They have no pattern or plan to follow. They utilize drinking as an escape mechanism and those who abstain appear intoxicated also because of the pressures and burdens of their poverty-stricken lives. Frank B. Deakin in his book, Spain To-day, remarks:

There cannot be any other civilized country in the world where the labouring classes have as much right to complain of their lot in life, and to rebel against it by

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 277.

every means in their power, as they have in Spain.<sup>5</sup>

Roberto Hasting, a student and friend of Manuel's, focuses on the degenerates. In his opinion, they do not possess human faces. They appear brutalized as they have been mistreated so harshly by the rich who adopt inhuman characteristics. Man can only become a total human being if he is allowed to live in a free society. Thus, it is essential to destroy a state organized and administered by the rich. Gerald Brenan states:

The chief cause of the evil of bourgeois society is that man has need of other men materially, but does not need them morally. That is why he exploits them.<sup>6</sup>

The majority of the characters are apathetic and suffer the spiritual malaise of abulia. Roberto, in a conversation with Manuel, tells him that everything is possible in life if one has the will and determination. On striving for a goal, one should aim for the top. "The Generation of 1898" also advocated will and energy. These men were anxious to liquidate the poor system of government and to free the lower class from their lassitude; too many were passive and lacked will and

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<sup>5</sup>Frank B. Deakin, Spain To-day (London: Labour Publishing Company, 1924), p. 111.

<sup>6</sup>Brenan, op. cit., p. 13.

determination. One of the members, Don Joaquín Costa, inveighs against inactivity and nostalgia. He says, "Lock up the Cid's sepulchre under a treble key, and attend to the needs of the day."<sup>7</sup>

In the trilogy, it is difficult for people who have been in bondage for too long to hope. The bourgeois is always successful, while the proletariat is the loser. Leandro, the son of Ignacio, is in love with la Milagros. However, he loses her to another suitor of more social prestige. Leandro, thus, commits suicide and later his father dies brokenhearted.

In the bakery, Manuel discovers how tiresome and exhausting the nature of the work of the laborers is. Here he is mistreated and suffers the indignities of the lack of respect accorded him as a person. He works diligently all night and although he sleeps during the daytime, he suffers from a continual physical depletion. Soon he becomes delirious with a high fever and his mother takes care of him. Although her maternal affection and solicitude are sincere, she employs emotion as a powerful weapon in her attempt to drive her son back to her middle class world. In the guest

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<sup>7</sup>S. de Madariaga, Spain (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), p. 132.

house, Manuel's romantic emotions, however, are those which propel him into the middle class for a brief period. He becomes involved in a relationship with dona Casiana's niece. Nevertheless, such a relationship between a vagabond and a "dama," one of high social status, cannot prevail and Manuel is ordered to leave. "Manuel avergonzado y confuso, no deseaba en aquel momento mas que escapar . . ." <sup>8</sup>

He approaches El Viaducto, his favorite place overlooking Segovia St. in Madrid. This is a site well-known for suicides. Manuel is torn between love and hatred; a desire to seek refuge in his former world and the hatred of that world. Manuel's emotional Anarchy provides fertile ground for the growth of an affinity for political Anarchy.

As time goes by, Manuel, his friend Vidal and El Bizco survive by stealing clothes. Hence he disregards another rule imposed by the traditions of the society. El Bizco believes that the world is a forest for hunting. Only the miserable people are able to obey the law of work.

Gradually Manuel Alcázar sinks deeper and deeper into the world of the night people -- criminals, derelicts. His alienation from bourgeois society intensifies after the death

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<sup>8</sup> Pío Baroja, Obras Completas (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1946), p. 330.

of his mother, his ultimate link to the society of conformity. He stumbles upon Exposito who is a rolling stone. He has neither father nor mother. He has spent the major part of his life inhabiting caves; corrals in the summer, shelters in the winter.

The anti-authoritarianism, the advocacy of nonconfinement and liberty are later manifested through four golfos with whom Manuel and Vidal are acquainted. The four live a life of nomads. They pass the mornings and afternoons sleeping and during the night, they prowl the streets seeking the means to survive. Mella is the ugliest of the four.

Con su cabeza gorda y disforme, los ojos negros, la boca grande con los dientes rotos, el cuerpo rechoncho, parecía la bufona de una antigua princesa.<sup>9</sup>

Mella has animalistic physical features. She resembles an ugly brute. Baroja seems to be indicating in a subtle way that the lower class, the nonconformists, have been brutalized by society so harshly that they are unfit to carry out the dream of demolishing the state, clergy and authority.

The other golfo, La Engracia, had also a bestial appearance and attitude. She is illiterate and laments ever having grown up because as a child, she was happy as there was

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 353.

always someone stable to guide and take care of her. There were days when she did not eat more than crumbs found on the ground of the market place. Urban Anarchism reacts violently to these intolerable conditions. The Anarchists detest the suffering of the proletariat and they blame it on the tyranny and injustice of authority.

Finally, Manuel finds himself in El Custodio's house which is filled with warmth and affection. However, his stay in this environment does not last long, for he leaves when he is rejected by El Custodio's daughter, La Justa, with whom he is in love. There appears to be a perpetual struggle between the life of conformity and vagabondage. So far, Manuel always resorts to the life of the latter. Manuel is dizzy with pain and he begins to walk hurriedly with no destination in mind. On passing the canal, many times he feels an urgent desire to drown himself, but even the water takes on the same aspects of the miserable slums. It is not even suitable to commit suicide.

Although Manuel is dejected, he accompanies the family of El Señor Custodio and Carnicerín to a bullfight. He tries to dress in the appropriate fashion, but he appears ridiculous because he is trying to become a bourgeois in order to impress La Milagros and her fiancé. Baroja's feelings towards bull-fights are seen through Manuel's reactions. The latter

considers it a cruel and cowardly, animalized behavior on the part of man. He leaves abruptly, filled with anger and he experiences an intense hatred. Hence he is prepared to demolish everything -- establishment and man.

In the second novel, Mala Hierba, the action takes place among the lower middle class. There is a conglomeration of artists, Bohemians, and degenerates. Like Manuel, they all lack will; they all lead useless lives with no set pattern. They oppose all authority. Owing to their unawareness of what is happening around them, they are ostracized from their environment mentally. These members of the lower middle class who refuse to depend on their fellowmen, inevitably become Anarchists. The author feels that Anarchism will not survive because of the Anarchists' absence of stability, will, knowledge and awareness of what is going on around them.

The portrayal of women is noticeable in Roberto's mind when he tells Bernardo that only a woman could be stupid and gullible enough to give him money for a photography shop. Most of the women are prostitutes, worthless and inconspicuous, contributing nothing to society. They are not active participants in the revolutionary social movement.

Manuel later is found working for the baroness of the middle class. This is one of the many jobs that he obtains. The job is simple and he has a lot of leisure time, which is



paradise to him. It is apparent that the uselessness in him is always salient; "siempre trascendía a golfo, con sus ojos indiferentes . . ."<sup>10</sup> The baroness leads a disorderly life roaming through the streets, engaging in divergent pleasures. She is separated from her husband as there is perpetual conflict between the two. Unfortunately, though, she needs money and refuses to work. Inasmuch as she is unable to receive it from her husband through a direct approach, she schemes and plots. Her husband represents the State which has all the wealth and power, but covets it instead of distributing it equally among all classes. Manuel's attitude to the husband is one of indifference. His only concern is to please the baroness.

In Mala Hierba, the feeling of instability still lingers in the new social middle class in which Manuel finds himself. In the beginning, there is a display of uncertainty and a lack of durability in respect to his employment. Although Manuel, for the first time, finds a good position -- that of a cajista working at a printing press -- a world of turbulence is still visible in his position with the press.

There were many newspapers -- El Porvenir, Los Debates, La Nación, El Radical, and El Mundo. In the newspapers, the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 410.

debates among the proponents of the varied fin del siglo, social and political theories raged heatedly. Sanchez Gomez, the printer, deals with unity and variety in his publications. In El Radical, he dedicates his column to the lack of government and corruption of power. Los Debates wrote:

The national proclivity to put the stress on man rather than on things, carries as its corollary, that newspapers read in Spain are more intended in view than in news.<sup>11</sup>

The journals consist of articles by Anarchists, Socialists and Syndicalists.

Manuel, who has sought refuge in the bourgeois world, wants to forget the life of poverty forever because it produces bad memories; but he is forced to return to the Madrilenian world of the slums, of the misery, and of beggars. Life, for him, is a daily uncertainty because of his friendship with Jesús who still lives in this degenerative area. Thus, again, he is ~~amidst~~ the miserable. Jacob, a Jew, retrogresses into a fantasy land ~~where~~ whenever he talks of his homeland, Fez, and the Jewish slums. He embroiders it as a paradise in the green country. He is living in Madrid in such filth and degeneration that he longs ardently for a better place, a Utopia where peace and harmony exist. Hence, he exaggerates and allows

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<sup>11</sup> S. de Madariaga, Spain To-day (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), p. 132.

his imagination to paint unreal pictures of his country. But in reality, however, his life in Fez is also meaningless, sad and unstable. Bakunin says that, "People are living in such a pathetic fashion because of the unfairness of the class system, of the state, of authority."<sup>12</sup> He wants humanity to be liberated from all authorities through destruction:

And the worst kind of authority is that of the State which is the most flagrant, most cynical and most complete denial of humanity because . . . every State, like every theology, assumes man to be fundamentally bad and wicked.<sup>13</sup>

In Spain, it was very evident that Anarchism could only succeed with the working class. The Anarchist philosophy was opposed to the aspirations of middle and upper class Spain. However, the laborers themselves were too apathetic and lacking in education to be capable of sustaining an interest in any revolutionary movement. In the prosperous industrial city, there was little hope of the Anarchist Movement succeeding as here, the people had more opportunities of procuring better jobs and material wealth. Thus, with these temporary gifts of the world, they were more prone to conform to society and the bourgeois value system. Consequently, they become

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<sup>12</sup>Gerald Brenan, The Spanish Labyrinth (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1948), p. 135.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

acquiescent to the rich and powerful because it is easier and less painful to conform, rather than become an individual and stand firmly for what they believe. There are many police reprisals towards the Anarchists. Many are brutalized physically, spending long periods of time in prison, exiled from the country, assassinated and murdered by the most drastic means -- bombs and guns. Nietzsche feels that fear or laziness is the reason why men fail to heed the voice of their true self. Men are afraid of social retaliation and do not dare to be their own unique selves. Thus he blames the State which he remarks, " . . . intimidates man into conformity and thus attempts and coerces him to betray his proper destiny."<sup>14</sup>

A typical example of this fear is demonstrated by Esther, a lady of middle class, who marries Bernardo, a very insignificant man lacking in both talent and money. Her mother becomes sick and she ceases working in order to take care of her. Unfortunately, her mother dies and she is left alone with no money and no home. She is desperate. Through luck, however, she encounters a Señora Fanny, a symbol of the establishment, who persuades her to get married to the artist called Bernardo. She is driven by fear and desperation to conform

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<sup>14</sup>Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 158.

to the wishes of Fanny through means of this marriage, for she realizes that it is her only chance of any type of security.

There is a continual breach with conformity and a renunciation of conventions in this second novel of the trilogy. This denial of the status quo parallels the first novel. Jesús, who is employed at the printing press, is tired of working because it is too monotonous. He is eager to wander without any destination in mind. Even at times, Manuel, the cajista, feels an inertia that is difficult to overcome.

Manuel is in agreement with Nordau in Degeneration when he states his views of man. He says that man has an insatiable appetite to find scapegoats, thus, they search for those that are feeble and powerless; someone whom they can deride and of whom they can take advantage, resulting in their superiority. Hence the rise of the class system with the inferior people being the proletariat.

Era gente atrosa: algunos, traperos; otros mendigos; otros muertos de hambre; casi todos de facha repulsiva, peor aspecto que los hombres tenían aún las mujeres, sucias, desgrenadas, haraposas. Era una basura humana, envuelta, en guinapos, entremecida por el frío y la humedad, la que vomitaba aquel barrio infecto. Era la herpe, la lacra, el color amarillo de terciana, el parpado retraído, todos los estigmas de la enfermedad y de la miseria.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Pío Baroja Obras Completas (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1946), p. 453.

While these poor, deserted people are suffering in an atmosphere of poverty, Jesús says that the rich sleep in their clean beds tranquilly. Don Alonso states that his life is a continuous Waterloo -- failure. In reality, he is referring to the whole laboring class who only find hope in Anarchism; a movement which has preached the destruction of the evils of society which is responsible for the circumstances of the lower class. This hope is seen through the eyes of El Hombre Boa:

Mañana quizá haya cambiado nuestra suerte.  
Tú no sabes lo que es la vida. El destino  
para el hombre es como el viento para la  
valeta.<sup>16</sup>

This quotation is ironic nonetheless, as one senses very strongly the author's negative impression regarding life and the Anarchist objectives. He feels that this is wishful thinking on the part of this character, and it is obvious that he is going to pursue the same vile and pathetic course he has always taken.

Jesús, an Anarchist, believes that people should live from the products that the land provides and not from the profits of public utilities. The Anarchists want to remove industries from State control. All the technological achievements, Jesús feels, serve no purpose for the poor because these

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 458.

people remain in a stagnant position as a result of the State which intimidates them. The electric light and the telegraph system are constructed to serve only those with money since civilization benefits people with money. The separation between the rich and poor is so vast that it almost seems to subsist, a physical wall. Nevertheless, a mental wall definitely exists with the poor on one side, screaming for justice and equality; but the rich on the greener side do not enter because they refuse to hear.

Even in the church, the House of God, where equality should reign, there is a display of inequality. Jesús and Manuel go there to rest and they are arrested. Nietzsche, expressing his views, remarks that the Church is the Anti-Christ which has perverted Christ's original call to man to break with father and mother and become perfect. Thus, the Anarchist wishes to destroy Catholicism since it is guilty of the above-mentioned statement.

The anarchistic attitudes explode through the minds of Manuel and Jesus. They are weary of the struggle to alleviate the misery of the proletariat through conventional means. Jesús says that he is compelled to become an Anarchist when he is confronted with the iniquities of the world; when he witnesses the death of men abandoned in the streets and hospitals. He earnestly believes that there is hope since he dreams of a

serene and peaceful society led by the Anarchists with the absence of hate, authority, policemen and soldiers. All men are free and much love exists among them.

In Aurora Roja, the Anarchists' approach is more dominant and direct than in the other two novels. In the prologue, Juan, the brother of Manuel, who is studying to become a priest, suddenly decides to relinquish this career. He no longer believes in the Church because he has seen too much disharmony and rancor within its walls. Thus, he is breaking away from the traditions instilled in him by his mother.

Cuando comencé a estudiar el cuarto año con don Tirso Pulpon, todavía tenía alguna fe. Al mismo tiempo que con don Tirso estudiaba con el padre Belda, que, como dice el lectoral, es un ignorante profesor. El padre Belda le odia al padre Pulpon porque Pulpon sabe más que él. Luego leí libros y pensé y sufrí mucho, y desde entonces ya no creo.<sup>17</sup>

The mother wants her sons to be passive and subservient in her image. Living with the constraints of the conventions of society is, in Juan's estimation, retrogression. He is determined to always move ahead -- to find fulfillment beyond the bonds of society. In the scenes of his journey to Madrid from the seminary, Juan already becomes a vagabond who walks in

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 512.



search of spiritual betterment with uncertainty. During his trip, he encounters the repressive measures of the civil policemen who represent the authority, fighting against criminals, vagabonds, and those without documents of identification.<sup>18</sup>

In Madrid, El Señor Canuto is a militant Anarchist. He places much importance on his individualism, so that he even changes the language for his own use. Juan, on finding his brother, scorns the bourgeois life the latter leads. He feels strongly that everything should be divided equally among people instead of the rich having all and the proletariat receiving none. One should follow the dictates of his own conscience instead of aping others.

The taverns in the first two novels are seen as places for the gathering of the golfos, poor people leading wretched and uncertain lives, and of unemployed individuals. No longer does the author paint this vile picture of the tavern in Aurora Roja. A new dimension is seen in respect to the purpose of the tertulia. In the tavern we find a parade of diverse Anarchist personalities who gather in order to express their ideals and opinions: Juan, a staunch supporter,

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<sup>18</sup>

A traveler had to present identification documents before being able to register in a hotel or enter Madrid.

Maldonado, El Libertario, el catalán<sup>19</sup> Prats and Zubimendo, a Basque. Each Anarchist has a personal philosophy -- there is no unified basis for action. El Libertario feels that Anarchism is the protest of the individual against the State. He wants to disown all ties of authority that are forced upon him by law. To Manuel, the Anarchist Movement seems to have good ideas but does nothing perceptible. The Anarchists, he feels, pass the time in debating theories but they do not propose or undertake constructive activities. While Maldonado, who possesses a mixture of political and personal ambitions, thinks that there should be no rules and regulations but the group should limit the admission of members by executing certain prerequisites. Libertario, a dreamer, disagrees with the proposition, being opposed to all compromise and all organization that is not based on free will.

The conflict, confusion of opinions and ideals are clearly visible and very prominent. Baroja is demonstrating through these opposing viewpoints the instability and disorder of the Anarchist Organization. It will never survive for there is too much disharmony and discord.

En el grupo se manifestaron pronto tres tendencias: la de Juan, la del Libertario y la del estudiante César Maldonado.

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<sup>19</sup>The most radical province of Spain that wanted complete independence from the rest of Spain -- autonomy.

El anarquismo de Juan tenía un carácter entre humanitario y artístico . . . El anarquismo del Libertario era el individualismo rebelde, fosco y huraño; de un carácter más filosófico que práctico; y la tendencia de Maldonado, entra anarquista y republicana radical, tenía ciertas tendencias parlamentarias.<sup>20</sup>

Maldonado wants to give the meeting a club-like structure; but both Juan and El Libertario oppose this because it involves intervention of the police and an imposition upon them of the bueraucratic order:

Una última forma de anarquismo, un anarquismo del arroyo, era el del Señor Canuto, de Madri-leño y de Jesús. Predicaban estos la destrucción sin idea filosófica fija, y su tendencia cambiaba de aspecto a cada instante y tan pronto era liberal como reaccionaria.<sup>21</sup>

The following passage from Spain To-day explains Pio Baroja's attitude towards Anarchism very aptly:

Human nature is so defective, and human egoism so strong and exclusive, that organized life cannot exist without some kind of authority which restrains individual impulse and enforces limitations in benefit of the community in general. Anarchy in its pure sense, or the absence of all government, would only mean a reversion to the conditions of life of our earliest ancestors, the cave dwellers.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Pío Baroja, Obras Completas (Madrid: Biblioteca Neuva, 1964), pp. 554-555.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 555.

<sup>22</sup> Deakin, op. cit., p. 50.

Later there is a discussion between the proponents of "Right" and the "Law." Everybody has the right to well-being but if one is not able to possess this, then one might as well not have the right to it. El Libertario blames the laws of the State for taking away one's rights for he believes that all laws are bad. If the laws and the State are suppressed, then man will become a good person again. The right (derecho) is a natural thing -- we have a right to life. One of the members agrees in the theory of Darwin -- the survival of the fittest. He says that man lives if he is able to survive and if he is not, he dies. When he is dead, he is buried. Thus, el derecho is a natural law; the struggle for life.

With the introduction of Anarchy, there will be no need to struggle in order to survive because there will be a world of love and happiness in which everyone will get what he needs. There will be a lack of the present-day idlers since idleness is a product of today's social organization. In this utopian society of the Anarchists, there will be no misers and avaricious people because of the absence of money and property, hence no thieves and criminals. For the sick, the jails will be converted into hospitals. The idea of category will disappear in respect to the working conditions simply because everybody will do what he is most capable of doing. El Señor

Canuto feels that it is very essential to bring about total destruction -- to burn everything, to annihilate the bourgeois, and the Church which has corrupted the reason of man through its teaching; the palaces, the convents and all the jails. "Down With the Bourgeois" is the motto of the Anarchists.

Roberto, an Anarcho-aristocrat also has anarchistic ideas which were developed while he was attending college. He hates the educational structure since he was accused of idleness when he was not successful in understanding what he read in school. He protests angrily against the establishment and its forced commitments, but he understands that it is necessary to adapt to conformity in order to survive, for life is an incessant struggle.

Progress to Juan is simply the result of victory through defiance against the source of authority. Authority is totally evil, an imposition, the law, the dogmatic precept, and confinement. Whereas, rebellion is all good; it is love, harmony, freedom of will, kindness and humanitarianism. Juan does not live except for the cause. Even when he is sick, he refuses to rest. Instead he continues contributing to the movement through reading and writing.

At the meeting of the Anarchists, one of the orators inveighs that:

despreciaba a los políticos porque eran unos  
 asnos; despreciaba a los sociólogos que no se  
 afiliaban a la anarquía porque eran unos  
 ignorantes; despreciaba a las socialistas  
 por vendidos al Gobierno; despreciaba a todo  
 el mundo . . .<sup>23</sup>

Anyone or anything that contradicts Anarchism is repugnant to these men. They repudiate God and master which are part of the bourgeois structure. The Bible is no more than a display of nonsense and blunderings and they do not believe in the soul. Anarchy is love and affection, but in order to obtain this, one has to struggle against misery and abjection which the State produces. The State is useless since its chief aim is to extricate wealth from the laboring class, only to deliver it to the leeches of bourgeois. They also want the abandonment of other parasites; such as the military, the priest and the judge -- ravens that live from human flesh and blood. They prefer famine and unemployment with freedom rather than abundance in slavery by authority. Juan pleads for the protection and justice of the women and children. Manita is a typical example of the mistreatment of the feminine sex. She has led a savage life scorned by society and was abused by the white man for so long that she has become accustomed to it. People like her, Juan would take to the third world -- a sphere

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<sup>23</sup> Pío Baroja, Obras Completas (Madrid: Biblioteca Neuva, 1946), p. 611.

of purity and goodness in the sky; in other words, "Anarchy." The proletariat are the ideal people for the propagation of Anarchism. Unlike the intellectuals of the city, the worker, lacking in awareness, grasps the idea of the movement in a gullible fashion and accepts any concept that contradicts those of the bourgeois.

Baroja illustrates the violence, characteristic of Anarchism. Juan soon becomes involved in a plot to destroy society by threatening it with a bomb, but it backfires when Manuel discovers this conspiracy and gets rid of the bomb before Juan is aware of it. Juan believes that it is necessary to make revolution, regardless of the price one has to pay. He feels that total destruction is the sole means of Anarchy ever existing, therefore, he is prepared to sacrifice friend and family for the cause. To perpetuate a race, it is necessary for a great number of individuals to die. Hence the result will be worthwhile. It will be the dawning of a new day of peace and equality. Throughout the three novels, Baroja expresses other violent acts; that of the murdering of Vidal by El Bizco, the killing by Leandro of his girl friend and his suicide. Manuel says that all the government, or the State does, is to protect the rich from the poor, men from women and men and women from children. This is a most repugnant aspect.

On the day of coronation, the Anarchists plan to start a revolutionary conspiracy. They plan to seize the king. Juan is weak and feverish, but overly anxious to play a significant part in the revolution. Nevertheless, the plan fails. Madrileño is arrested. Juan tries to help the old man but he collapses and is rescued by Manuel. In bed, Juan is delirious. He refuses to see a priest although he is dying. He sleeps for a long time and wakes up on the dawning of day. He is very content and happy because he feels that he has achieved something during his life, thus, his death will be meaningful and purposeful. Baroja ardently believes that Juan's death is an ironic symbol of the failures of the Movement. Spain's supposed new beginning (dawn) has brought death in its wake. The Revolution is struck down; society remains essentially unchanged. All of the efforts expended by so many people have failed to correct the ills of the society of Madrid.

However, Juan's fellow Anarchists, friends and followers feel that his death at dawn is a birth of hope and optimism. Juan, the man, dies but his dream lives on among his friends:

Compañeros: Guardemos en nuestros corazones,  
la memoria del amigo . . . Era un hombre, un  
hombre fuerte con un alma de niño . . . Pudo  
alcanzar la gloria de un artista, . . . y  
prefirió la gloria de ser humano. Pudo  
asombrar a los demás y prefirió ayudarles  
. . . Fue un gran corazón, noble y leal . . .;



fué un rebelde, porque quiso ser un justo.  
Conservemos todos en la memoria el recuerdo  
del amigo que acabamos de enterrar . . . ,  
y nada más . . .<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 465.

## CHAPTER II

### BOURGEOIS MANIFESTATION AND BOHEMIANISM

Spanish society through the centuries has been characterized by class stratification and class struggle. These phenomena intensified in fin del siglo Spain. The most influential and powerful class was that of the bourgeois. They were still the ruling group who resisted any type of change, and clung to the traditions and mores of the society. They dominated the economic and social life and deafened their ears to the incessant pleas of the lower class. They alienated themselves from the more inferior, ordinary class.

The bourgeois class became the ruling class as a result of the Liberal Revolution of 1868. Before 1868, the degenerative upper class was in power. Nevertheless, the aristocracy was soon overthrown through protest against the electoral corruption and other falsifications found in this government by the Liberals. The latter wanted a liberal and tolerant lay State. Many enthusiasts were eager to start a revolution in order to substitute a new dynasty for the old. Juan Prim was the revolutionary leader of the Liberals and he wanted the destruction of the aristocratic regime.

On June 22, 1966, an uprising developed whereby artillery sergeants shot their officers; it was incited by the resentment of the sergeants against the aristocrats who refused to permit promotion. Much confusion and disorder existed for the first time since 1836 in the artillery unit.

This Revolution did not only occur as a result of the political crisis, but also because of budgetary, commercial and cotton crises. As a result, profits were sinking and inflation was rampant. Thus, the poor suffered at the expense of the discontent of the rich.

Outbursts occurred due to political disillusionment and unemployment in the violent revolutionary southern districts. During the latter part of 1869, a political rebellion broke out in regard to the voting of a monarchy. The Revolution took place in September of the same year. The governor of Tarragona was murdered; troops attacked in Valencia and Saragossa.

The Revolution ended with the two major parties prevailing -- Liberals and Conservatives. They were dominated by the bourgeois. Antonio Maura was a Conservative leader, while José Canalejas, the Liberal leader, was a democratic radical. Many Liberals felt that the government was corrupt as it disregarded the needs and exigencies of the proletariat. The last third of the nineteenth century witnessed a rigged

alternation of Conservative and Liberal governments. The blatant corruption produced antipathy to the political system on the part of the young, especially idealistic Liberals. In 1903, Francisco Silvela, a Conservative leader, seceded from politics after the collapse of his second ministry. " . . . more significantly, the political system could not survive the dignification of politics as Silvela and Maura conceived it."<sup>1</sup>

Antonio Maura, Francisco Silvela's successor, achieved even less than his predecessor. His rule was a total fiasco and his revolutionary ideas ignited conflict between the Conservatives and Liberals. The Liberal visualized his Revolution as one of a clerical, authoritarian nature which they opposed. They attempted to overthrow the unscrupulous parliamentary dictator who paid no heed to the questions asked about his governmental methods and policies; but they were not successful. Nonetheless, a continual struggle reigned between Maura and the Liberals for quite some time. Consequently, many disenchanted Liberals dropped out of politics and fell into the bohemian pattern.

The trilogy, La Lucha por la vida, manifests numerous portraits of the powerful, the ruling class, the bourgeois and

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<sup>1</sup>Raymond Carr, Spain: 1808-1939 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 203.

and the conservative political leadership of this class.

Roberto cherishes his capitalist membership in the middle-class society. He believes that a part of the established order provides stability, security, and an answer to the struggles of life. Yet, Roberto is an upwardly mobile character, and he strives actively to secure a foothold in the upper class. In the trilogy, Roberto symbolizes contentment with the status quo, which favors his class and the acquisitive, material instincts characteristic of this class.

In La Busca, Manuel represents the anti-bourgeois stance. His disenchantment with his personal family life and the social and political conditions of Spain cause him to drop out of his middle-class world into that of the lower class. In Mala Hierba, Manuel comes into contact with the bohemian sub-culture. Only later does he re-enter the middle class through an act of desperation.

It is obvious throughout the three novels that the rich always obtain their desires. They are always successful, whereas the proletariat loses; especially those in love relationships. Such is the case with Leandro, Manuel's cousin and la Milagros, the girl with whom he is in love. Leandro is rejected by his lover because she becomes acquainted with Lechiguino, one of more prestigious and lofty social status than Leandro. Also Manuel experiences a similar loss later on with la Justa, the daughter

of a rag man called El Custodio. La Justa becomes involved with a man who is considered a paragon of perfection. He is the ideal man -- tall, slim, handsome, well-dressed, with much ability and talent. Above all, he is of a more prestigious class than Manuel.

For the most part, Manuel's life has no purpose. He is seen gliding from one employment to the next through the help of his mother, who is part of the establishment and wants her son to amount to something. She would have preferred Manuel to attend the seminary like his brother, Juan, in order to become a priest, but this is too much to hope for. Thus, she is content to see him working. In Mala Hierba, nevertheless, all her teachings of conformity and traditions are not wasted for Manuel is beginning gradually to distinguish the benefits and security of the bourgeois world from the instability and insecurity of the society of vagabonds and idlers.

He finds himself frequently in the company of his cousin, Vidal, and his friend, el Bizco. The latter two live each day stealing and utilizing their wits as a means of survival. Their unpredictable and radical manner of living frightens Manuel. Hence he realizes that it is essential that he acquire a new mode of existence although he is uncertain of his selection.

Roberto, a student and friend of Manuel, maintains his

status of bourgeois. He has plans to be a publisher of intellectual works; he has arrived at the conclusion that it is senseless to wither away and to become shriveled in the petty tragic life of the slums when it is relatively easy to elevate oneself if one has strength, energy and will. Will is necessary in order to conquer the misery and hardships of life.

In Mala Hierba, Manuel desperately wishes to break all ties with the lower class although this desire does not take form immediately.

Yo no sirvo para esto; ni soy un salvaje, como El Bizco, ni un desahogado, como Vidal. ¿Y qué hacer?<sup>2</sup>

Finally in the home of El Custodio, a rag man, Manuel finds warmth, shelter and affection. The house represents the security and stability which are synonymous with conformity and the conventions of the establishment. Now for the first time, Manuel is in a position to become an honorable, law-abiding citizen in the eyes of the ruling class. It is difficult to predict inasmuch as the reader knows what generally happens to Baroja's golfos. The golfos usually amount to nothing. They become deteriorated and lead useless lives

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<sup>2</sup>Pío Baroja, Obras Completas (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1946), p. 347.

lacking awareness. Besides, Baroja does not think anyone can be really happy.

Manuel pensó que si con el tiempo llegaba a tener una casucha igual a la del Señor Custodio, y su carro, y sus borricos, y sus gallinas, y su perro, y además una mujer que le quisiera, sería uno de los hombres casi felices de este mundo.<sup>3</sup>

Hence, Manuel feels that happiness can only be procured through the possession of an occupation and marriage.

In the final paragraph of La Busca, Manuel decides to become a day person -- a person who conforms to the establishment and societal traditions instead of a night person, a vagabond -- because he has no desire to be labeled as a "boy who is no longer good."

Mala Hierba takes place in the poor middle class.

Manuel is viewed with a great determination of adhering to a more stable life. He searches for Roberto Hasting since the latter is the only person who can aid him in his new venture. Hasting is a strong, secure individual. Upon meeting him, Manuel is astonished to find him adapting so well into the establishment. He is a professor and does a great deal of writing. Thus, is manifested the intellectual bourgeois which Nietzsche discusses in relationship to his Superman theory.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 361.



Roberto shares his philosophy of life with Manuel. He feels that it is necessary to do certain things in order that one maintains one's equilibrium; that is, "buscar, preguntar, correr, trotar; algo encontrarás." <sup>4</sup> One is capable of surviving any struggle if one possesses will and strength.

Manuel constantly finds himself amidst many artists and bohemians who are useless to society. They have no purpose in life and lack the capacity of realizing anything. This type of life is repulsive to Manuel and gradually his link to this deplorable world is seen becoming more and more tenuous and his personal involvement lessens.

Manuel progressively climbs up the ladder, coming closer and closer to the bourgeois class by means of his employment with the baroness. His job is simple, for he merely walks the baroness' dog each day. Thus, he has much leisure time to think of his life and the course it is taking. When he is in the presence of the baroness' daughter, Kate, he wants more than ever to become a member of the middle class to which she belongs. She is a portrait of innocence and goodness; very intelligent and well-versed on many subjects. Often they would sit down and talk about their lives. Kate usually related her trips to Europe, while Manuel described his

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 382.

picaresque life of vagabondage. The girl felt a repugnance towards the people of the street because it seemed to her that these people were evil. She produced the solidity in the household of her mother.

Pasado el día de reyes, Kate volvió al colegio, y en la casa se restablecieron las antiguas costumbres y reino el habitual desorden.<sup>5</sup>

The baroness, who led a disorderly life engaging in divergent pleasures, finally felt that she should face the reality of life as her disordered life served no purpose. She comes to this decision on viewing the attitudes and life style of her daughter, Kate. The system of life she had been leading lacked organization. It was necessary for her to include some type of method, a plan or a regimen in her existence. It is the survival of the fittest which Darwin advocates as significant and meaningful in this world. Thus, the baroness strives to convert her life by changing her environment from the city to the country.

Roberto, too, has specific goals to pursue. His two aspirations are to become wealthy and become married to a wealthy girl. One can survive if one is willing to struggle. He feels that he was born to be rich and aims very high.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 410.

In contrast to the presentation of the lower class society, the bourgeois society is visualized as the epitome of perfection and goodness. The rich separate themselves from the poor environment by creating a barrier prohibiting any obstacle from entering. Hence the poor remain in their abject poverty, dying from hunger and ill-treatment and the bourgeois are sleeping in their warm, cozy beds. To the poor, life is repugnant and this is probably why Manuel is trying to escape from it.

After the death of his cousin, Vidal, Manuel is more determined than ever to become a member of the establishment. He finds a job in a printing press of Chamber. His girl friend, Salvadora (which means savior), who is of the middle-class society, encourages him to be a day person as she believes that one is able to obtain everything with will and patience. She brings order and discipline to the household and teaches piano lessons to some children in order to acquire money. Manuel, at last is on the right and straight path to high society. He becomes a cajista and he and Roberto are partners in a printing press. "Ya era un burgúés, todo un señor burgúés."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>  
Ibid., p. 544.

In Aurora Roja, Juan, Manuel's brother who has left the seminary, encounters Manuel. Juan is a staunch supporter of the Anarchist Movement; very unstable and disorganized. Manuel is constantly bringing order to his brother's life. He is a security blanket for Juan and helps him when he is drunk and incapable of sustaining himself. He also saves Juan from becoming involved in a conspiracy requiring the exploding of a bomb in Madrid. To Roberto, Juan is a romantic who is dragged along by generous, unreal ideas; he wants to reform society.

Manuel, the bourgeois, is exemplified as a model of solidarity and progress. His three ideals are, " . . . hacerse rico . . . para casarse con una mujer . . . y poner entre los dos una casa de préstamos . . ." <sup>7</sup> Manuel feels a great satisfaction at his position in society since he believes that the way to survive is to join the fittest people in power; and this is exactly what he has done. No longer does he float endlessly without a destination. He is glad to be a part of the day people.

On his death bed, Juan is happy and content, but one asks oneself if his life was really meaningful. Baroja seems to think that he would have accomplished more had he led a

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 562.

life of order and stability -- the only way to survive the struggle of life. The bourgeois class was so entrenched and dominant in Spain that the Movement had no chance to reform from outside, only within the system.

Baroja deals with several movements in his trilogy. He discusses one in very minute detail, that of Bohemianism. Yet it is worth mentioning because it plays an important role in the fin del siglo Spain since most Bohemians became Anarchists.<sup>8</sup> The Bohemians were degenerates -- possessing little capacity for anything. Because of the corruption in government, they felt powerless to fight and had, therefore, only one alternative, that of escaping:

They all show the same lacunae, inequalities, and malformations in intellectual capacity, the same psychic and somatic stigmata.<sup>9</sup>

Things appear to them in a distorted fashion and they are antipathetic towards the whole world as they do not understand it. They are very self-centered and sever all ties from the outside world. As far as they are concerned, they are the only ones that exist. Much disorder and

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<sup>8</sup> Anarchism was the most salient and popular movement during this period, and it played a significant part in the confusion and disturbances in Madrid.

<sup>9</sup> Max Nordau, Degeneration (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1905), p. 241.

confusion predominates in their midst through undisciplined actions and violence.

They lack the capacity to care for others, to feel pain. They act spontaneously without compassion; being unable to visualize clearly how they should behave in regard to the feelings of another. Thus, they ostracize themselves from society and are also considered as outsiders by everyone.

. . . The degenerate now remains a child all his life. He scarcely appreciated or even perceives the external world, and is only occupied with the organic processes in his own body. He is more than egotistical, he is an egomaniac.<sup>10</sup>

The Bohemians in Mala Hierba are too, degenerative outcasts. The majority of them are artists, always moving from one place to the next, never stable. They receive great pleasure in speaking badly of others. An atmosphere of hate and envy always prevail among these degenerates. Don Servando Arzubiaga is the oldest Bohemian, while Bernardo Santín is the youngest.

Santín era flaco, tenía la cara correcta, la nariz afilada, los ojos tristes, el bigote rubio y la sonrisa insípida.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 254.

<sup>11</sup>Pío Baroja, Obras Completas (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1946), p. 383.

Baroja seems to be insinuating the discord and meaninglessness of the Bohemian life through the physical description of Santin. The former loathes their perverted mannerisms and destructive characters.

It seems difficult for them to adjust to their surroundings as a result of continual conflict. Pío Baroja says that they are like women, in that they are eager to complicate their lives with miseries and trivialities. They, like the Anarchists, were victims of abulia. Hence it is a great task for them to repress their obsessions; to refrain from spontaneity and to curb their moods. Nordau, author of Degeneration, remarks that the degenerate, therefore, is not in a position to comprehend his relation to other men and the universe; and to appreciate properly the part he has to play in the aggregate of social institutions.

The Bohemian is an individual who is isolated and abandoned from society and there is no formed thought in him of what society represents. He is totally unaware of the laws as he believes that "the universal moral law does not exist for him."<sup>12</sup> He continuously defies authority as he refuses to allow himself to succumb to the traditions and conventions of the society. The Bohemians remain idlers and vagabonds serving

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Nordau, op. cit., p. 259.

no purpose. Roberto makes a remark about these people:

Si estas gentes tuvieran un talento excepcional, podrían ser útiles y hacer su carrera, pero no lo tienen; en cambio, han perdido las nociones morales del burgués, los puntales que sostienen la vida del hombre vulgar. Viven como hombres que poseyeran de los genios sus enfermedades y sus vicios, pero no su talento ni su corazón; vegetan en una atmósfera de pequeñas intrigas, de mezquindades torpes. Son incapaces de realizar una cosa . . .<sup>13</sup>

These beings are incapable of adjusting themselves to the different aspects and predicaments of their environment regardless of how hard they try. As a consequence, they suffer continuously resulting in their destruction. Their mere presence and their own personal selves are hostile to society lacking in civilized sentiments. Manuel makes a very analytical remark concerning these Bohemians:

. . . pero cuando un hombre no puede comprender nada en serio, cuando no tiene voluntad, ni corazón, ni sentimientos altos, ni idea de justicia ni de equidad, es capaz de todo.<sup>14</sup>

These egomaniacs are ill-tempered and disgusted with the establishment because they are misfits. "He is in a constant state of revolt against all that exists, and contrives how he

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<sup>13</sup> Pío Baroja, Obras Completas (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1946), p. 384.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 384.



may destroy it, or, at least dreams of destructions," exclaims Max Nordau of the egomaniac. These aliens do not possess definite ideals and lack the capacity of conceiving how that which annoys him could be altered in such a way that it would be beneficial to them. They are not able to perceive very far. This group does not amount to anything since they play no role in the society in which they live. Eventually they destroy themselves. They are very lonely people, vexed by everything imaginable.

Hence, discontent as the consequence of incapacity of adaptation, want of sympathy with his fellow-creatures arising from weak representative capacity, and the instinct of destruction, as the result of arrested development of mind together constitute the anarchist, who according to the degree of his impulsions, either merely writes books and makes speeches at popular meetings, or has recourse to a dynamite bomb.<sup>15</sup>

The Anarchist, as mentioned in the first chapter, is a nonconformist who retaliates against the establishment by refusing to succumb to authority. His sole purpose on earth is to demolish the society totally through whatever means, for this is the only way there can be a reform and a revolution of the miserable conditions of the proletariat, unjustly treated by the rich and powerful. Thus, as Nordau indicated, the

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Nordau, op. cit., p. 265.

Bohemian inevitably results into an Anarchist, an anti-social being, a pessimist, a criminal, an imbecile; hating and distrusting the whole of mankind through his thoughts, feelings and actions. Canuto, an Anarchist, seen in Aurora Roja, states:

¿Qué hay que hacer? ¿Pegarle fuego a todo?  
 Pues a ello, y a echar con las tripas al  
 aire a los burgantes, y tirar todas las  
 iglesias al suelo, y todos los cuarteles,  
 y todos los palacios, y todos los conventos,  
 y todas as cárceles . . . Y si se ve a una  
 cura, o a un general, o a un juez se acerca  
 uno a él disimuladamente y se le da un buen  
 cate o una puñalá traperá . . .<sup>16</sup>

A picture of decadence -- "a state of society which produces too great a number of individuals unfit for the labours of common life,"<sup>17</sup> is repeatedly painted in regard to the environment of the Bohemians. These individuals are not an organ of the social call of their environment. They are estranged from it. Max Nordau believes that the individual is the social cell and he must function with a subordinate energy. Nevertheless, if the energy of the cells become independent, the organisms composing the total organism cease likewise to subordinate their energy to the total energy, and the Anarchy which takes place constitutes the decadence of the whole.

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<sup>16</sup> Pío Baroja, Obras Completas (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1946), p. 559.

<sup>17</sup> Nordau, op. cit., p. 301.

Thus, the Bohemians, placed in a society of order and stability, cannot cope, for they are not equipped to deal with the struggles that life presents; therefore, they rebel loathing the world in its entirety. In Mala Hierba, Manuel observes continuously these Bohemians. He notices that:

. . . cada palabra tenía un retintín rabioso, y por debajo de las frases más sencillas se notaba que latía el odio, la envidia y la intención mortificante y agresiva.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Pío Baroja, Obras Completas (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1946), p. 383.

### CHAPTER III

#### SOCIALISM, FASCISM, COMMUNISM, SYNDICALISM AND NIHILISM

Socialism, Fascism, Communism, Syndicalism and social movements occurring in fin del siglo Spain all played an active role in the development of the confusion, revolt, revolution of ideas and disorder of the society of Spain.

Although they were closely related in many respects, there were differences in each movement. The Oxford Dictionary states that Socialism is a political and economic theory of social organization which advocates state ownership and control of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. Communism advocated the dictatorship of the proletariat whereby a member is allowed to work according to his needs. Whereas Fascism in Spain supported the idea of obedience to authority over individual liberty, it preferred a rule by a minority which would initiate radical political and economic reforms through authoritarian methods. Syndicalism, on the other hand, aimed at uniting all workers relying upon their personal resources without the aid of the bourgeois.

All the above-mentioned movements in this chapter are

portrayed in La Lucha por la vida through both the thoughts and actions of the characters. Socialism will be dealt with first, and the other movements will be treated in the order of their prominence in the novels.

The Socialist party in Madrid was composed principally of union members, printers, typographers, and a handful of doctors. Trade unions were set up in order to combat the injustice of the employers towards the employees. The agitation began in 1881. The strikes took on a peaceful aspect with the sole purpose of bettering the conditions of the working class. The Socialists believed they were travelling a long and difficult road since progress was slow. Elections were unfair because the results were determined in advance by the government ruling at that time.

In 1905, the Casas del Pueblo (Worker's Houses) were introduced. Each one was composed of committee rooms, a library with Socialist and general literature, and a cafe. Meetings were held at these houses. Yet this party realized many obstacles would impede the accomplishment of its goals. The government viewed the Socialists as radicals and took extreme measures to cripple the movement.

A stream of strikes from 1903 to 1905 in Barcelona created calamity. These strikes expressed the discontent and grievances of the proletariat and were sponsored by the

Socialists and Syndicalists. In Castile, the laborers received substandard wages, little food, and a small plot of land which did not provide sufficient products for sustenance. However, the Socialists, a few years later, scored their first victory in 1917 with Iglesias, the leader of the Socialist party, who was elected to the Madrid Municipality. With the victory, the Socialists gained new strength for their desire to implement a state worthy of the members of their party. The Socialists illustrate the point that Nietzsche, a philosopher popular with fin del siglo political activists, makes through their ideologies and actions:

What man and every living being wants more than anything else is . . . a higher, more powerful state of being in which the thousand-fold impotence of his present state is overcome. Man wants to be perfect himself, to recreate himself, to become a creator rather than a mere creature . . .<sup>1</sup>

The depiction of Socialism is visible in the third novel, Aurora Roja in the trilogy. The character, Morales, a nonconformist, agrees with the ideas of Socialism. He feels that the state is the only responsible structure and that it should control the production, distribution, and exchange of products. He does not advocate a state sustained by capitalism

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<sup>1</sup>William Benton, Encyclopedia Britannica, XVI (University of Chicago, 1968), p. 496.

and the army, but a state as a center of trade, the Municipal, for example. This center is necessary because it is profitable to everyone. It emphasizes the common works and prevents the growth of selfishness and egoism. The state is concerned with the welfare of each individual. Its actions are useful. Morales continues:

Uno que nace en Basilea, tiene, desde que nace, la atención del Estado; el Estado le vacuna, el Estado le educa y le enseña un oficio; el Estado le envía un médico gratis cuando está enfermo; el Estado le consulta por un plebiscito, por si hay que hacer reformas en las leyes o en las calles; el Estado le entierra gratis cuando se muere  
 . . . .<sup>2</sup>

Morales remarks that each Municipality will be autonomous with each man living in the manner he desires without any disturbance from others. Order is necessary, thus, there must be a central figure to organize the masses of the society. The director of society will develop a practical pattern to be followed. The freedom of each person will be enhanced rather than impinged as he adheres to certain rules inasmuch as he will lead a better life. The energies of all the classes will be united in order to bring about gradually an organized development of society according to the Socialist program.

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<sup>2</sup>Pío Baroja, Obras Completas (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1946), p. 596.

Communism is very similar to Socialism, but it places more emphasis on equal distribution of goods of the state with the professed aim of establishing a stateless, classless society. Spanish Communists felt that a Communist government would provide a millennium for the dissatisfied and miserable people. Marx and Engels felt that if they were able to overthrow the concept of private property, there would be an end to the class struggle. Hence then there would be no reason to fight. Everyone will then be able to work at his own pace and capacity without any form of competition. Communists feel that "private property is the root of all evil,"<sup>3</sup> for it aggravates class antagonism, gluttony, selfishness. They feel that private property leads to the development of the state.

Government is the "instrument of power" -- the unnatural appendage to society -- which is created for the express purpose of protecting the privileged class and the private property it possesses from the just demands of the exploited class.<sup>4</sup>

Hence the society is divided into two parts -- that of the exploiting capitalistic class and the exploited proletariat.

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<sup>3</sup>W. Cleon Skousen, The Naked Communist (Utah: The Ensign Publishing Company, 1961), p. 48.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 49, 50.



. . . el Estado no sirve más que para extraer el dinero, y la fuerza que el supone de las manos del trabajador y llevarlo al bolsillo de unos cuantas parásitos.<sup>5</sup>

Communism regards the state as unnecessary inasmuch as everything will be done by the people who will have no desire to oppress Communist theories since they are optimistic regarding the nature of man. Justice will prevail in the Communist regime because the Communist is a just man. Freedom can only be acquired by means of a classless, stateless society as the State serves no purpose. It only protects the rich against the poor and causes much dissension among the people and classes.

Communism advocates the liquidation of government, religion, property rights, wages, competition. Thus, a total destruction is essential in order to solve all the problems of modern society. Roberto comments:

. . . lo mejor sería echar todos los estorbos; quitar la herencia, quitar toda protección comercial, todo arancel; romper con las reglamentaciones del matrimonio y de la familia; quitar la reglamentación de trabajo; quitar la religión del Estado; que todo se rija por la libre concurrencia.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Pío Baroja, Obras Completas (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1946), p. 613.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 635.

The Syndicalist Movement, initiated in the nineties, also abhors the injustice of bourgeois towards the laborers. Brennan gives us a brief and very good definition of Syndicalism. He states that Syndicalism is simply the French for trade unionism. It attempted to better the working situation of the laborers by adhering to rigorous self-control of industry by the workers, resorting in a strike, if necessary. The Movement desired total emancipation of the workers through elimination of government and State interference. In essence, the trade unions would be the director of the economy. Nevertheless, material emancipation could only occur if freedom existed politically and in the minds of the workers. As soon as they ceased to regard themselves as slaves, they would as a result, be free. Juan states, "El obrero, para él, era un artista con dignidad, sin la egolatría del nombre y sin envidia."<sup>7</sup>

A strike occurred in 1902 arousing in the cities much excitement among the working class, especially in Andalusia. There were also many peasant revolts, but nothing was accomplished. The ardent urge of the peasants and proletariat to learn how to read intensified. They became aware of what was happening around them.

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<sup>7</sup>  
Ibid., p. 551.

Sometimes, after a single reading from Tierra y Libertad or El Productor, a labourer would feel illuminated by the new faith. The scales would fall from his eyes and everything would seem clear to him. He then became an obrero consciente. He gave up smoking, drinking and gambling. He no longer frequented brothels. He took care never to pronounce the word of God. He did not marry but lived with his companera to whom he was strictly faithful, and refused to baptize his children.<sup>8</sup>

The workers asked for rest periods and division of lands although they were not granted them. In addition to the high rate of unemployment, the strikes and revolts also protested wages considered to be indecent. Nevertheless, in the end, the workers did achieve modest gains. This historical background of Syndicalism and the discontent among the workers manifests the urgent need of the unions which the Syndicalists advocated for the betterment of the proletariat.

The ideal of living in peace, harmony, and freedom is paramount in La Lucha por la vida. However, Baroja seems to feel that the Church and bourgeois class have disrupted and brainwashed the minds of the peasants and proletariat to submit to their domination. The bourgeois will always remain at the top as they have all the money. In order for the peasants to obtain a decent life, money is essential. Manuel's

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<sup>8</sup>  
Brenan, op. cit., p. 174.

friend says to him when he realizes that Manuel does not have any money:

. . . que como no tienes dinero, ni eres hombre de presa, ni podrás utilizar tu inteligencia, aunque la tengas, que creo que sí, probablemente morirás en algún hospital.<sup>9</sup>

Nothing is more touching and idealistic than the laborers' belief that the rich will one day become aware of their wrongdoings and be converted, forming a world with no more rancor and hate but love. The idealists among the Syndicalists hoped that peaceful moral persuasion would spur the bourgeois to work with them for reform. The laborers who considered themselves more pragmatic believed the Spanish bourgeois had no intentions of making concessions to the workers and they resorted to violence -- strikes, assassinations, revolts, sacking different areas of Spain.

Fascism is closely connected with the welfare of the laborers. It supports a common order with the state being the main organization. Its goal was to allow the laborers to work as they wished without force. Fascists were different from the other movements in that they had rich supporters. They preached unity for all by authoritarian rule, eliminating political parties; complete liberty of man. They feel that if

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 416.

violence is necessary to achieve their end, then, it should occur. They are struggling for a totalitarian state for both the powerful and the poor. This movement strongly felt that "social strife, economic misery, and political discord would end only when Spaniards once more forged a common destiny for themselves in the world."<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, in the trilogy, it is apparent that all Spaniards will never unite because the powerful have become too accustomed to their societal position of domination and control to allow the proletariat, whom they despise, to share in their good fortune. The comments of historian Stanley Payne echo sentiments expressed by Fascists in the trilogy of the novel,

Aurora Roja:

Para Morales, el progreso no era más que la consecuencia de una lenta y continua lucha de clases, terminada en una serie de expropiaciones. El esclavo expropiaba a su amo al hacerse libre; el noble expropiaba al villano y nacía el feudalismo; el rey, al noble, y nacía la Monarquía; el burgués, al rey y al noble, y llegaba la revolución política; el obrero expropiaría al burgués y vendría la revolución social.<sup>11</sup>

Morales is in agreement with the Fascists. He believes that the State has to be the central authority in order for

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<sup>10</sup> Stanley G. Payne, Falange (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1961), p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> Pío Baroja, Obras Completas (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1946), p. 595.

progress to exist. The State is stable, secure, and cares about the welfare of all of society. He feels that it is more logical to unite all the classes into a powerful weapon to force reforms. The State benefits all the world instead of just a selected few. The establishment says Morales is a major defense of the proletariat. To prefer complete destruction of society, to kill, to wound, is a crime.

Roberto also thinks that authority is better than the law because it can be more just and convenient. In Aurora Roja, he remarks, "Yo prefiero obedecer a un tirano que a una muchedumbre; . . . La tiranía de las ideas y de las masas es para mí la más repulsiva."<sup>12</sup>

Nihilism is a philosophy of skepticism deriving from the Latin term "nihil" -- nothing. The Nihilists were disheveled, untidy men who rebelled against tradition and social order, struggling for individual freedom. A Russian Anarchist defined Nihilism as the symbol of struggle against all forms of tyranny, hypocrisy, artificiality, and for individual freedom. Fundamentally, it represented a philosophy of negation, positivism, materialism, and a revolt against the established social order. It refuted all authority exercised by the State, Church, or by the family. It based its belief on nothing but

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<sup>12</sup>

Ibid., p. 633.

scientific truth. Science became the remedy for all social problems. Nihilists felt that everything evil derived from one single source, ignorance, which only science could conquer. Nihilism denied the duality of man as a combination of body and soul, of spiritual and material substance; it questioned the validity of the divine right doctrine. Thus, conflict arose with both ecclesiastical and secular authorities.

Nihilism impregnates the pages of La Lucha por la vida. In La Busca, three vagabonds, Vidal, El Bizco and Manuel notice a man, woman and child with saddened faces and immediately they realize that they are people who worked. They feel that it is useless for a person to have an occupation. "Sólo los miserables podían obedecer la ley del trabajo."<sup>13</sup> Anything dealing with authority, stagnancy and stability appall these individuals. They pass their lives living in the slums of Madrid. At times, Manuel views the society in which he lives with much skepticism. When he is rejected by la Justa, his girl friend, his anger rises. He blames the establishment and their class system. If he were of high social status, he would have never been treated so coldly.

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<sup>13</sup>  
Ibid., p. 332.

Y luego generalizaba su odio y pensaba que la sociedad entera se ponía en contra de él y no trataba más que de martirizarle y de negarle todo.<sup>14</sup>

Multitudes of nonconformists are visible throughout the degenerative slums. They shirk from responsibilities, roaming the streets at night without any definite destiny. They sleep on the corners of streets, eating crumbs left on the ground.

The uselessness, nothingness of life is displayed through the feelings and attitudes of the characters:

En estas rachas de lujuria era cuando le acometían con más fuerza los pensamientos negros y tristes, la idea de la inutilidad de su vida, de la seguridad de un destino adverso, y al pensar en la existencia de abandonado que se le preparaba, sentía su alma llena de amargura y los sollozos le subían a la garganta . . .<sup>15</sup>

This nothingness continues to be visible in the following quotation:

Manuel sentía una sorda irritación contra toda el mundo: un odio hasta entonces amortiguado se desperataba en su alma contra la sociedad, contra los hombres . . .<sup>16</sup>

In the third novel of the Madrilenian trilogy, Juan is seen gradually breaking away from the establishment by ceasing

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 370.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 365.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 507.



to continue his education at the seminary. He believes in nothing -- not the Church, nor the traditions of the society. He abhors all authority and is determined never to retrocede, but always move forward:

Libre como el pájaro en la selva;  
libre para cantar y para morir de  
hambre.<sup>17</sup>

The majority of the characters refuse to obey. They prefer to be individuals releasing themselves from the ties of authority, "Ni Dios ni amo."<sup>18</sup>

The philosophy of negation is displayed through the following passages:

. . . despreciaba a los políticos porque  
eran unos asnos; despreciaba a los sociólogos  
que no se afiliaba a la anarquía porque eran  
unos ignorantes; despreciaba a los socialistas  
por vendidos al Gobierno; despreciaba a todo  
el mundo, . . .<sup>19</sup>

Juan, in a speech to the organization of Aurora Roja, states that the State was not worth much as it extracted money from the poor. He wanted complete elimination of the law, State, judge, military, and priest. To a Nihilist, nothing exists -- society, order, nor authority.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 395.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 553.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 611.

Man, it seems, is forever searching for happiness and a better life. However, men have different ideas of how they can possess their dreams. Some feel that a classless, stateless society will bring harmony; others feel that there should be a system of private property. Whereas, many laborers tend to identify with unionism. Also there exist some Fascists who believe that severe autocratic control will be the best means of achieving a better society. All of these ideals have flaws and this is probably the reason why other members of the society are so skeptic and have faith in "Nothing."

## CONCLUSION

The trilogy, La Lucha por la vida, deals in much detail with social and political movements of the fin del siglo Spain through the actions and thoughts of the person-ages. Anarchism is depicted as the most salient of the movements. Juan Alcázar, a staunch supporter, gives himself completely to the cause and is content on his deathbed because he feels that he has achieved much.

Much confusion and chaos among the various movements are visualized. Each character has different ideals and philosophies which collide with each other. Nevertheless, they all are in agreement in one aspect, that is, they all advocate a better life for the proletariat.

Degenerates, bohemians, decadents, and artists crowd the pages of Mala Hierba. These miserable people are ignorant of the occurrences in their environment since they have alienated themselves from the traditions and mores of society. Much vagabondage and anti-conformity to the bourgeois class are manifested also in the first novel, La Busca, through the central character, Manuel Alcázar, who is anti-bourgeois in certain sections of Baroja's trilogy.

On the other hand, both Manuel and Roberto Hasting depict bourgeois manifestation by means of their jobs, prestigious positions in society and environment. Roberto feels that one must manifest will and determination in order to survive the struggle of life. To Don Alonso and most of the characters in the trilogy, life is a Waterloo.

Baroja, who opposes the traditions of society completely, does not believe that these characters can ever be happy for they are not capable by themselves of achieving the success and survival of the movements. Their lives are meaningless since they accomplish very little. In order to achieve any goal, they have to possess will, which most of them lack. Those with an abundance of will, such as Roberto, attempt to dominate the others. The result is conflict, factionalism, a lack of unity, and the failure to reach their goal.

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